

I am an extra class amateur radio operator (KC6WCT) and a Volunteer Examiner (VE) who teaches amateur radio in high school. I strongly agree with RM-10782. The Coppola family is correct in eliminating morse code as an FCC requirement.

As a VE myself, I can say with experience that morse code is keeping young people out of amateur radio. Today's youth are computer knowledgeable, and as soon as they find out morse code, a technology over a century old, is required they move on to other interests. It has been the experience of both the United States and the United Kingdom that reducing morse code requirements increases amateur radio involvement.

I can't help but worry about the increasing age of amateur radio operators and worry about the future of amateur radio. While there used to be many amateur radio magazines at bookstores, now there are few or none. While there used to always be several amateur radio manuals at Radio Shack stores, lately there have not been. I worry this may ultimately be a question of the survival of the valuable public service of amateur radio.

Many have commented correctly on the decreasing importance of morse code. Take a look at our military, our merchant marine service, and the amateur radio communities of other countries. If that does not convince you, then just listen to the amateur radio bands. It has played a decreasing role over the years in the above areas and countries, including our country. The morse code is no longer required by international regulation since WRC-03. Already Switzerland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway and the Netherlands have all dropped morse code requirements. Austria and New Zealand are expected to follow soon. And all that has happened internationally just over the past few months!

In an A.R.R.L. survey about 75% said they rarely or never use morse code. If amateur radio is to survive as both a hobby and a service for emergencies, then it must focus on the new technologies of the future rather than on a mode which was developed over 150 years ago.

One advantage in eliminating the morse code requirements would be to eliminate the need for medical waivers or testing of handicapped individuals.

Another advantage is it would make it easier to reduce the number of license classes from six (novice, technician, technician plus, general, advanced, and extra) to three. The FCC now only tests for three classes and keeps records for five classes of license. Combining novice, technician, and technician plus licenses into just a technician license and promoting advanced licenses to extra so there are truly only three license classes would make your job much easier. You would not have to make any immediate changes, just have novices, renew as technicians and advanced licenses renew as extras. You are already having technician plus licenses renew as technicians. Most countries have three or less license classes and there is no reason why we cannot do the same. (In fact we did for many years.) Your database will accurately reflect everyone's status. It is too bulky and cumbersome for enforcement to say certain people will have certain privileges if they retain the requisite paperwork while not retaining that information in the F.C.C. database. You do this now with technician plus licenses. As a matter of fairness, no person should lose privileges as a result of the restructuring. Fewer license classes will mean less testing for the VECs, less record keeping for you, and easier enforcement for everyone.

I believe in the lessening importance of morse code and in eliminating it as a license requirement. It is not a matter of lowering standards. It is a matter of modernizing requirements. We no longer teach the reading of the sundial in the public schools. Morse code should be considered as one optional mode of communicating just like any other mode instead of being considered as the most important and vital prerequisite to advancing in amateur radio. There is no other communication mode (packet, SSB, satellite, SCTV, FSTV, etc.) that requires a demonstration of ability in that area. There is no evidence that morse code makes an operator more desirable, motivated, or better qualified.

Focusing so much effort on the antiquated morse code requirement interferes with the amateur radio purpose of advancing the radio art. Make it easy on yourself. I hope you at the F.C.C. take the big long term view of where amateur radio is going and do what is best based upon the future rather than upon past traditions.

Thank you for your consideration. I know you have a difficult job. Regardless of what you do, there will be a lot of work for you and criticism by those who never want to change. That being the case, I hope you move boldly to simplify, keep amateur radio attractive to young people, reflect the lesser importance of manual morse code, reduce the number of license classes, and do whatever else will make your job easier for the long term.

Sincerely,

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